

Check It Out:

- MSL's New Director
- Town Meeting Vote
- First Wednesdays Reviews

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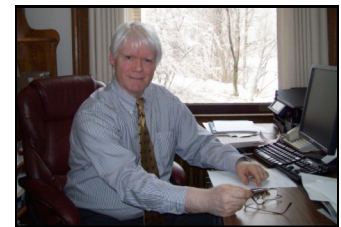
Meet Jim Knowlton

It is appropriate to kick off the first edition of the Mark Skinner Library newsletter with an interview with the library's new director, Jim Knowlton. Jim sat down for a Q and A session about two months after he assumed the directorship in early January.

We spoke about Jim's first impressions of the MSL and how that influenced his decision to take the director's position. He said that the library felt like "a nice place to be." An article in The Manchester Journal had Jim admitting to

"prowling" around the MSL anonymously before he took the job. Sitting with his laptop or a book, he watched how staff and customers interacted. What pleased him was that the staff members were genuinely friendly to the customers. It wasn't a "have a nice day" superficial greeting, but a warm and genuine welcome.

Jim noted that the MSL was a good fit for its small, Vermont town. However, he stressed that the library has a varied customer base, from small children to



Executive Director,
Jim Knowlton

retired adults, from long-time local residents to new arrivals, from new adult readers to accomplished writers and critics. He saw that the staff welcomed all of them and that the library's programming attempted to meet their diverse needs and interests.

Director *continued on 2*

The Ayes Have It!

One of the shortest town meetings in recent history took place on Saturday, February 26, 2011. Library supporters went to the meeting prepared to defend their request for funding. Board President, Pauline

Moore, made a brief, but meaningful presentation stressing the importance of the library and its services during times of economic downturn. In addition to the traditional services, the library provides job

search resources, computer and Internet accessibility and, for some, just a place to be warm and safe.

Vote *continued on 2*

*Libraries are
changing
from book
depositories to
community
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Meet Jim Knowlton

Director continued from 1

When asked how the MSL differed from other libraries, Jim returned to the issue of diversity. He sensed vibrancy in the library and credited the mix of people and interests that went well past local issues and current popular fiction.

Jim discussed how libraries are changing from book depositories into community centers. He spoke about how those changes have also redirected the duties of library directors from bibliographic issues to non-profit management, and the services of libraries from traditional book lending and collection

maintenance to social services and community building.

This led to a discussion about Jim's qualifications for the Library Director position. His library work, in four different libraries over the past nine years, gives him a strong knowledge base in library work, which will help him to evaluate and direct our capable and committed library staff. However, the main things he feels will help him in this job are his business management education and his years in the business world. He is well acquainted with boards and foundation work, and with balance sheets

and strategic planning. When asked what the top issues on his to-do list were, Jim quickly responded, "to expand the presence of the MSL in the community." In order to achieve this goal, he stated that it was necessary to: create a new organization plan and chart; re-examine the organization's mission; ensure that all stakeholders shared a vision for the library's future; and build a strong planned-giving program. It will also be necessary to augment services and examine new roles for the library.

Look for Pt.2 of the interview in next month's issue



**Town Meeting -
Democracy in Action**

The Ayes Have It!

Vote continued from 1

When the vote was taken, the voters responded with a resounding chorus of "ayes" and library supporters breathed a well-earned collective sigh of relief . . . until next year.



Exploring Beethoven's Sketchbooks

There's an old joke about how many people it takes to screw in a light bulb. We can turn that around, and give it a positive spin, by asking, "How many organizations does it take to present a program in Manchester?" On Wednesday, March 2nd, it took three: the Vermont Humanities Council, the Mark Skinner Library and the Congregational Church. The Humanities Council, through its First Wednesdays series, offered the program; the Mark Skinner Library presented it; and the Congregational Church provided the setting. More than 70 people braved snow showers

and frigid temperatures to attend the March 2nd First Wednesday presentation based on Beethoven's Sketchbooks. The presenter was Michael Arnowitz, a pianist trained at the Juilliard School of Music in New York City, the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, the Aspen Music School, Yale University, and Indiana University.

Using a combination of lecture and performance, with a healthy dose of humor, Mr. Arnowitz shared with us his love of Beethoven's music and his theories about that creative process. He compared

Beethoven to an architect who meticulously designs his buildings and erects them block-by-block. Using material from Beethoven's musical sketchbooks, Mr. Arnowitz compared Beethoven's embryonic ideas with the final version of the same piece. He spoke about Beethoven's search for his unique identity; he stressed how important independence from the church, from royalty and from the binds of tradition was to Beethoven.

Michael Arnowitz travelled beyond eighty-eight keys to deliver a dazzling performance.



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What's History Got to Do With It?

Henry Ford famously said, "History is more or less bunk." Around 100 people gathered to hear author, historian, and professor Woden Teachout discuss why history actually does matter in a re-scheduled First Wednesdays program.

With her trademark dynamic delivery, Prof. Teachout explored the intellectual skills (including historical imagination, skepticism, and awareness of multiple perspectives) and larger cultural understandings that come from studying the past.

At least half of the audience was comprised of Burr and Burton Academy high school students- a fact that Teachout delighted in. "This is the most diverse group I have ever lectured to," said Teachout.



Woden Teachout

History continued on 4

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The Mark Skinner Library: Manchester's Public Library is committed to serving the life-long journey of learning by providing information and opportunities for personal enrichment and enjoyment to people of all ages in our community.

What's History Got to Do With It?

History continued from 3

The evening was not all lecture.

Teachout challenged the audience to express their opinions and thoughts. Harvey Flaxman shared his take on the evening. "Bravo! Last night's First Wednesdays program, hosted by the Mark Skinner Library, was all about audience interaction with History through the use of PowerPoint slides, which spurred our imaginations and pro-

voked a dialogue between young and old alike."

The next program in the First Wednesday series will be held on April 6th at 7PM at the Congregational Church. Susan Cooke Kittredge will speak about her father, the late Alistair Cooke, and show *All at Sea*, his recently rediscovered 1933 short film featuring Charlie Chaplin.

What a gift these free programs are to the people of Vermont!

"Bravo! ... last night's First Wednesdays program ... spurred our imaginations and provoked a dialogue between young and old alike."



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